TITLE

PRINTABLE DIE CUT BUSINESS CARD HOLDER

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

This application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Patent Application Serial No. 60/430,246 filed December 2, 2002.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates generally to printable paper products and, in particular, to a printable die cut business card holder.

Personal business cards remain a viable means of advertising in today's business environment. The combination of typical information displayed and portability render the business card a valuable tool in promoting goods and services to the recipient without being overbearing or overly obtrusive.

Various means of presenting and making business cards available are known in the art, many of which are permanent and expensive to produce. Various types of business card stock and address labels are known that are sized to be run through and printed on a commercially available printer.

The U.S. Patent No. 4,817,905 discloses a foldable stand-up support device that is constructed of a single sheet of cardboard and includes an integrally attached box for displaying and dispensing items, and legs for supporting the device on a flat surface.

The U.S. Patent No. 5,458,242 discloses a free-standing collapsible literature holder that is die cut from an elongated sheet and includes a flap that is folded in to expose an opening for displaying and dispensing items, such as pamphlets and the like.

The U.S. Patent No. 5,950,341 discloses a display device and easel that is formed from a single piece of die cut paperboard and includes a plurality of slots on a rear panel for receiving a tabs on a front panel to form an aperture for receiving a photograph. The device also includes extendable legs on a middle panel for displaying the device on a flat surface.

The U.S. Patent No. 6,294,237 discloses a free form laminated cardstock assembly that includes a sheet of card stock able to be printed on a printer and having a

plurality of die cuts for creating a laminated object, such as throwing toys or a napkin ring, after printing.

The U.S. Patent No. 6,631,839 discloses a holder for business cards that is formed from a single piece of die cut cardboard or the same stock as used for business cards. When assembled, the holder includes a display area on a front portion thereof for customizing the appearance of the holder.

It is desirable, therefore, to provide a business card holder that is able to be run through a commercially available printer to provide a business card holder that is portable and inexpensive to produce.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention concerns a printable die cut business card holder. The card holder includes a sheet of stock adapted to be run through a printer. A blank is formed in the sheet of stock, an outer edge of which is defined by a plurality of die cut lines. The blank also includes a plurality of score lines intermediate the die cut lines. The blank can be printed by processing the sheet of stock through the printer. The blank can be separated from the sheet of stock along the die cut lines and folded along the score lines to form a business card holder having a front portion, a rear portion, and a holder portion.

The business card holder in accordance with the present invention is able to be run through a commercially available printer and provides a business card holder that is portable and inexpensive to produce.

DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The above, as well as other advantages of the present invention, will become readily apparent to those skilled in the art from the following detailed description of a preferred embodiment when considered in the light of the accompanying drawings in which:

Fig. 1 is a schematic plan view of a blank for a printable die cut business card holder in accordance with the present invention;

Figs. 2 through 6 are perspective views of the business card holder of Fig. 1 shown in various stages of assembly; and

Fig. 7 is a front elevation view an alternate embodiment business card holder having printed surfaces according to the present invention.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

Referring now to Figs. 1-7, a blank **12** for use as a printable die cut business card holder in accordance with the present invention is shown. The blank **12** is formed from a sheet of paper stock **10** of the type used for forming business cards, business card holders and counter displays, or a similar type heavy paper stock. Preferably, the sheet **10** is sized to a standard paper sheet size, such as 8½ inch by 11 inch paper, 8½ inch by 14 inch paper, A4 paper, and the like, and that can be used with a suitable printer (not shown), such as a commercially available black and white printer or a color printer. For example, the blank **12** in a single sheet form is particularly suited to the types of commercially available printers used with personal computers in homes and businesses. Alternatively, the sheet **10** can be sized to reduce the amount of waste material at the edges and/or can be provided in continuous feed form for high speed volume printing.

As shown in Fig. 1, the blank **12** is aligned with the stock **10** in the "portrait" orientation well known to users of computer printers. Those skilled in the art, however, will appreciate that the blank **12** may be formed in a landscape orientation and/or oriented and/or sized to allow for multiple blanks **12** to be formed from a single sheet of stock.

The blank **12** is formed by a plurality of die cut and score lines. In Fig. 1, a line having relatively long solid portions interrupted by short breaks, such as a line **11**, represents a die cut line with the solid portions being cuts extending through the stock **10** and the breaks being uncut stock that easily tears when the blank **12** is removed from the sheet. Dashed lines, such as lines **16**, represent score lines that are continuous cuts that do not extend completely through the stock **10** and serve to facilitate folding of the blank **12** after the blank **12** has been removed from the stock **10**, as discussed in more detail below. The line **11** is a cut line that defines a periphery of the blank **12** at which the blank can be separated from a surrounding carrier portion **10a** of the sheet **10**. During manufacture of the blank **12**, the outer edge **11** is cut and formed by a die (not shown), which provides a complete cut through the sheet of stock **10** at the solid portions but allows the blank **12** to be run through the printer without separating from the sheet **10**.

The blank **12** includes a front portion **13** at a lower end, a rear portion **14** in the middle, and a holder portion **15** at an upper end. The front portion **13** and the rear portion **14** are joined at opposed foldable side edges **16**. The side edges **16** are scored such that the front portion **13** and the rear portion **14** are able to fold with respect to each other when the blank **12** is assembled, as outlined in more detail below. The front portion **13** includes four die cut curved slots **17** each for accepting a respective corner of a standard size business card **35**, best seen in Figs. 5 and 6. A generally X-shaped die cut slot **18** is formed intermediate the card holder slots **17** to facilitate inserting a push pin (not shown) or other type of fastener for mounting purposes, such as on a bulletin board or similar vertical planar surfaces. The front portion **13** includes a semicircular extension portion **19** intermediate the side edges **16** defining an upper edge of the front portion at a die cut line **31**. However, the extension portion **19** can be of any desired shape.

The rear portion **14** includes a pair of wing portions **20** extending outwardly from sides of the rear portion **14** adjacent a score line lower edge **21** (after folding) thereof. An inner edge of each of the wing portions **20** includes a die cut line **22** formed in the stock **10** extending between a pair of score lines **33**. The rear portion **14** also includes a pair of leg or support portions **23** formed therefrom. Each of the support portions **23** includes a vertically extending scored inner edge **24** and a die cut outer edge **27** and are operable to provide support when the card holder **12** is utilized as a free-standing member on a substantially horizontal surface, best seen in Fig. 4.

The rear portion **14** and the holder portion **15** are attached by a connector portion **25** that extends between the lower edge **21** of the rear portion **14** and a score line lower edge **26** (after folding) of the holder portion **15**. The holder portion **15** of the blank **12** includes a front wall **28** and opposed outwardly extending side portions **29** attached at score lines **32**. Each of the side portions **29** includes a tab **30** extending outwardly therefrom at score lines **34**. The tabs **30** are inserted into corresponding slots formed at the die cut lines **22** of the wing portions **20** when the blank **12** is assembled. When assembled, as discussed in more detail below, the front portion **13**, the connector portion **25**, the front wall **28** and the side portions **29** form an open top holder pocket, indicated generally at **40** in Fig. 6, for a plurality of the business cards **35**. Preferably, the holder pocket **40** is sized to receive standard-size business cards. Alternatively, the holder

pocket **40** may be sized to receive any item suitable for display and disbursement such as brochures and CD-ROM's.

After the sheet **10** with the blank **12** has been run through the printer, the blank **12** may be separated from the carrier portion **10a** of the sheet **10** to form a card holder best seen in Figs 2-7. Alternatively, the blank **12** may be separated from the sheet without running the sheet **10** and blank **12** through the printer. The blank **12** is separated from the sheet carrier portion **10a** by applying pressure to the sheet **10** adjacent the cut lines on the outer edge **11** while holding on to the blank **12**. Once the blank **12** is separated from the carrier portion **10a**, the blank can be folded along the score lines, as shown in Figs. 2-4, to form the holder.

Referring now to Fig. 1, the lines **11**, **17**, **18**, **22**, **27**, and **31** represent die cut lines that extend through the sheet **10** and the lines **16**, **21**, **24**, **26**, **32**, **33**, and **34** represent score lines in the sheet **10**, which do not extend completely through the sheet **10** and allow the respective portions **13**, **14**, and **15** to be folded to form the card holder.

The card holder **12** is assembled by folding the front portion **13** and the rear portion **14** along the score line **16** in a direction indicated by an arrow **41** (Fig. 2) such that an inner surface **13b** (Fig. 3) of the front portion **13** and an inner surface **14b** (Fig. 2) face toward each other and an outer surface **13a** (Fig. 2) of the front portion **13** and an outer surface **14a** (Fig. 3) of the rear portion **14** face away from each other.

After the front portion **13** and the rear portion **14** are folded, the connector portion **25** is folded towards the rear portion **14** along the score line **21** and the holder portion **15** is folded toward the connector portion **25** along the score line **26** in a direction indicated by an arrow **42** (Fig. 2) such that an inner surface **15b** (Fig. 3) of the holder portion **15** faces toward the outer surface **13a**. The wing portions **20** are folded along the score lines **33** such that they extend substantially perpendicular to a plane of the outer surface **14a** (Fig. 3). The side portions are **29** are folded along the score lines **32** such that they extending substantially perpendicular to the inner surface **15b** (Fig. 3) of the holder portion **15**. The tabs **30** of the side portions **29** are folded along the score lines **34** such that they extend substantially perpendicular to the side portions **29** and are then inserted into the respective slots **22** in a direction indicated by an arrow **43** (Fig. 3) to enclose and form respective side walls of the holder pocket **40**. When assembled, the holder pocket **40** is defined by the respective surfaces **13a**, **15b**, and the interior surfaces of the side

portions **30**, the wing portions **20** and the connector portion **25**. The support portions **23** may be separated from the rear surface **14a** along the cut lines **27** and folded outwardly along the score lines **24** in a direction indicated by an arrow **44** (Fig. 4) to extend substantially perpendicular to the surface **14a**.

When thus assembled, the card holder **12** may advantageously be placed in a free-standing configuration on a horizontal planar surface, best seen in Fig. 4-6. In the free-standing configuration, the card holder **12** rests on a lower surface **25a** of the connector portion **25** and on the free lower edges of the extended support portions **23**. If the support portions **23** are not extended outwardly from the rear surface **14a**, the card holder **12** may be advantageously mounted to a substantially vertical surface such as a bulletin board (not shown) or the like. When mounted to the bulletin board, the support portions **23** are folded towards the rear surface **14a** in a direction opposite the direction **44**, which allows the rear surface **14a** to be placed flush against the vertical surface of the bulletin board and held by a fastener (not shown) extending through the slot **18**.

As shown in Fig. 7, a printed holder **12'** can have the surfaces **13a** and **15a** printed thereon with a design **36** and/or a logo **37** and/or a message **38**. In fact, such printing can be advantageously performed on one or both sides of the blank **12** in any area. As described above, the printing is done while the blank **12** is attached to the carrier portion **10a** of the sheet **10**, which allows for an unlimited amount of creativity and customization on the part of the end user of the product. Printer templates and drivers may be written in software for controlling a printer of the card holder **12'**, similar to the numerous templates and drives for address labels, mailing labels and the like known in the art.

Advantageously, the support portions **23** may be folded inwardly or outwardly multiple times, so that the card holder **12, 12'** may be moved from a vertically mounted position, to a horizontal surface free-standing configuration and back again as many times as desired, providing a great deal of flexibility in the presentation of the business cards. Alternatively, the card holder **12, 12'** may be formed in any shape that is advantageous for presenting brochures, or other similar types of literature and other items.

In accordance with the provisions of the patent statutes, the present invention has been described in what is considered to represent its preferred embodiment. However, it should be noted that the invention can be practiced otherwise than as specifically illustrated and described without departing from its spirit or scope.